

A
DISCOURSE

UPON

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SELF-MURDER:

OR

The *Cause*, the *Nature*, and immediate *Consequences* of SELF-MURDER,
fully Examined and truly Stated.

• IN A

LETTER

TO A

FREE-THINKER that despis'd Life.

L O N D O N :

Printed for THO. GREEN, over-against
Sir *John Falstaff's Head*, Charing-Cross.
M.DCC.XXXII.

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S I R,

IT is an afflictive Consideration, as well as strange, that Man, who is made in God's Image, Chief in Dignity of the visible Creation, and so framed by his indulgent Maker as to be capable of enjoying both

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Worlds, should maturely, deliberately and wilfully cut himself off from that Privilege, put a stop to all the enjoying Powers of his Nature, and by his own hand plunge himself, at once, into the Destruction of Soul and Body.

But as Instances of this kind lately have been numerous, and Men have, in some measure, given way to the Commission of this Crime, thro' their Ignorance of the Nature of *Self-Murder*, the Consequences of it in the next World, and the way or means of guarding against the Temptations to it in this; I think I can do nothing more to the Honour of God, and opposite to the Kingdom of the Devil, (who was a Murderer from the Beginning) than to set the Act of *Self-Murder* in a just and clear Light, with proper Directions to avoid it. And this I will endeavour to do,

I. *First,*

I. *First*, By shewing the true Grounds and Cause of *Self-Murder*. And,

II. *Secondly*, The Nature and immediate Consequence of it.

III. *Thirdly*, I'll give Directions to avoid it; with suitable Advice to fix the Mind, under Temptation to this Sin, in Peace.

First, I am to shew the true Grounds and Cause of *Self-Murder*. And this I shall do first *Negatively*, and then *Positively*.

Negatively. It cannot proceed from any Law or Dictate of Nature; because all Animate Beings, in their natural State, universally, absolutely, and in all Cases adhere to the Law of Self-preservation, nor can any single Instance be produced among the Birds of the Air, the Fish of the Sea, the Beasts of the Field, or any other sensitive Being, of destroying themselves upon any account whatever.

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ever. Even in the most painful State, Nature chuses rather to bear than destroy.

To say, they want Reason to show them the way out of their Misery, is, in fact, owning that Nature unalterably moves to Self-preservation.

And in regard to reasonable Beings, Reason directs them to observe the Laws of the God of Reason, who expressly enjoins them not to commit Murder, either of themselves or others; and the natural, plain design of giving Reason to any Beings, can't be for the Destruction, but the Welfare of their Beings.

2. Nor, Secondly, can it spring from Grace, because this inculcates Patience and Resignation to God under every Affliction; nay, it enables Men to bear Afflictions chearfully, and to glorify God in so doing. Grace shews Men, that all outward Afflictions are comparatively light, and, in reality, tend (if well improv'd) to

to work for them a far more exceeding weight of Glory : so that Grace teaches Men to rejoice, and that justly, in outward Afflictions, and not to be overcome by them. And as to inward Afflictions, the just Sorrow of Mind, and internal Remorse for Sins past ; Grace enables Men to remove both the Sting and Guilt of them, and establish the Soul in true Peace.

From all which you can't but plainly see, that a Man must renounce the Direction of Nature, of Reason and Grace, before he can give way to the Commission of *Self-Murder*. Which brings me to show the *positive* Cause of it.

2. *Positively* then, the Cause of *Self-Murder* generally, if not always, is, a base, corrupt, loathsome, sinful State of Mind ; a detestable and filthy State within, which kindles in the Mind Discontent and Self-loathsomeness. In this

3 case,

case, the Devil takes his Advantage, and pours in his Temptations, and there being nothing (especially if the Man be void of Employment, of a melancholy Temper, or has lost his satisfactory Relish of sensual Pleasures) to weaken the force of them, he, by representing to the Imagination the deformed and miserable Condition in which the Man is, gradually renders him unable to bear himself, or endure his own Picture, and so prevails upon him, to put an end (as he vainly hopes) to that Misery, which he looks upon as otherwise incurable.

So that it is some heinous (tho' perhaps undiscover'd) Sin, that, in conjunction with the Devil, is the Root and Parent of *Self-Murder*; some heinous Sin, I say, such as Adultery *, Uncleanness *, Self-pollution *,

*** Great Numbers have been brought by Uncleanness to Self-Murder; others almost to Despair: but by good and timely Advice, been recovered.*

lution*, Sodomy*, Covetousness, Pride, Malice, Distrust in God, Contempt of his Word, or the like devilish Principles, is generally the known or latent Cause of this Sin of *Self-Murder*.

Thus it was Pride and Vanity in the Heart of *Ahitophel*, thro' which the Devil moved him to go and hang himself. The Case was as follows; This wretched Statesman had no Regard to the Honour of God, no Gratitude to him that raised him, or any Views above this World; but was strongly actuated by the Desires of Vain-Glory, and an unquenchable Thirst after the Praise of Men: and therefore when he was defeated in these Views by the interposal of Heaven, and had his Counsel rejected by the Direction of Providence; he could not bear the Disappointment, but became fullen and discontented; upon which the Devil took the Advantage, and prevail'd upon him to hang himself.

B

Much

Much of the same vain-glorious Temper was *Herod*, *Cato*, and others of former Ages. They had no Views above their own Praise; the Design of their whole Lives was to procure the Applause of Man, and therefore as they idolized themselves, and had no real Regard to God's Honour, he gave them up to the Conduct of their own Hearts, and suffer'd them to close their Days with the most dishonourable End, and so become the Contempt and Scorn of wise and good Men in all Ages. *Herod*, 'tis true, was not his own Murderer; but still his Excess of Vanity ripen'd him for Vengeance, and while he was hunting for the Praise of Man, he was smote by the Angel of God, because he gave not God the Glory, and he was eaten of Worms, and gave up the Ghost. His uncommon Death shows the Vanity of his Life.

Judas

Judas is another Instance, upon Record in the Holy Pages, of this kind : The Guile, Hypocrisy, and Avarice that lodged in his Heart, open'd it for the Devil's Entrance, and thereby enabled him to tempt him first to betray his Master, and after that to destroy himself, that so he might go to his own place, *i. e.* to Hell.

And so likewise, upon a thorough Examination, we shall find (if we can come at the Truth) that they are generally worthless, base, corrupt Persons, *i. e.* Men that have no enjoyment of themselves left, either as rational or as brutal Beings, Persons sunk into the utmost Vileness and Degeneracy of Nature, before they arrive at the Act of *Self-Murder*.

And indeed, on the other hand, a righteous, brave, upright, good Man can't lay violent hands on himself; because he has always a Measure of

true Good within, infinitely preponderating all the outward Evils of this Life; and so tho' all things should be black and dark without, yet he would be all Light and Joy within; and by virtue thereof he sees beyond the short-liv'd Troubles of his earthly Pilgrimage, and views, as his own, after a few turns more, the everlasting Glories of the Heavenly Canaan.

So that upon the whole, this may be fixed as a general Truth, *That a vile corrupt Soul, or a loathsome, base, detestable State of Mind within,* is the Cause and Ground of *Self-Murder*; and that where-ever a Man falls by his own Hand, it is *Satan* the Murderer that directs and guides it.

I now come,

II. In the second place, To the immediate Consequence of this Crime; which is eternal Ruin.

For

For the Devil, 'tis plain, tempts, or takes the Souls of fuch Men out of their Bodies, and then of courfe he fixes them in his own Kingdom; where the Worm of Conscience dies not, and where the Fire or Wrath of God never goes out; where every Sense is compleatly fill'd with moft exquisite Torments, and where the shadowy Troubles, of this Life, which before they could not bear, are now become real and eternal.

Universal Nature, with which they are furrounded, abhors, reproaches, and torments them.

Infinite Confufion and Horror opens upon them, and rings Peals of Terror in their Minds for ever: So as there their Torment is infinite as well as endless.

They have rejected and caft off for ever the God of Life and Happinefs, and are now fallen into the Arms of Death and Mifery, and
ever-

everlastingly shut up in the Pit of Destruction or Abyss of Hell.

1. *Objection.* But some perhaps will, from what I have said in the former Head, alledge, That if *Self-Murder* be contrary to Nature, Reason, and Grace, then none but a Madman can commit it, and consequently his Madness will be his Excuse.

Answer. Madness grounded upon, or arising from habitual Wickedness, has no Excuse, or the least Alleviation: It is Sin in its full Maturity and Perfection.

Folly, judicial Blindness, and spiritual Madness is the natural Consequence of indulged Sin; as much as Stupidity or Drunkenness is of excessive Drinking: And therefore if a Man through a Habit of Sin, and the long Government of the Devil, should at last become thereby disorder'd in his Senses, or a Lunatick,
and

and then kill himself, his Madness in that case would be no more an Excuse than Drunkenness would be; nay, it is so far from a just Excuse, or a proper Plea in favour of the *Self-Murderer*, that it's a plain Demonstration, that the Spirit of God is quench'd in him, and that the Devil has, at last, divested him of all the Directions both of Nature and Grace, robb'd him of all his divine Guards as a Christian or a Man, and so got or taken full possession of him, list'd him in his own Service, and fix'd him in an open State of Rebellion against his God and Saviour.

And with respect to Juries upon those Occasions; wherever there have been known Evidences of a profligate vicious Life, the *Self-Murderer* should be always brought in a wilful Murderer, and the Carcass of every one that falls in such a manner, ought not to be entomb'd in consecrated

crated Ground, but should have the Burial of an Afs, and the utmost marks of Reproach cast upon it, in order to deter others from giving way to, or falling into the like Snares and Wiles of the Devil.

Object. 2. Others will say, a Man's Body is his own, and he may use it as, or do with it what, he pleases.

Ans. This is a poor Shift, a plain deceit put into the heads of Men by *Satan*, and has no Foundation of Truth to rest on: because every one of common Sense, that will but exert his Reason, must see that the original Propriety of the Body is in God, that he makes it and preserves it; and therefore that it must be an Act of Injustice for Man to destroy it, or indeed use it any otherwise than he expressly allows of, or for any other ends than for which he receiv'd it.

A

A Man's Body is not absolutely his own, it belongs to God, to his Country, his Family, and his Friends; and therefore it ought to be used to the Glory of the one and the Good of the other.

Object. 3. Others will say, that Men may have plain and inward Intimations from God, grounded upon the Occurrences of Providence, to commit this Fact of *Self-Murder*.

Answ. God, who is the God of Nature, does not inwardly dictate to any Man to act contrary to the general Rules of Nature established by himself with regard to the Life and Death of Man, or his continuance in this World, and departure out of it: and therefore those Motions and Impulses occasion'd by any outward Event, and taken for divine Suggestions, Calls or Dispensations, are nothing but Illusions of the Devil fixed upon some Passion, such as Fear, Pride, Impatience, or the like in-

C

ward

ward Distempers. And therefore he that obeys those Calls, must go to the place where *Satan* leads him.

There are several other Objections grounded upon the foolish Vanity of the Heathens, and the spiritual Blindness of their corrupt Poets; but all those are so frothy and trifling, so plainly contrary to all Rules of solid Reason, that they can have no weight with any one that gives himself leave to think seriously about them. And therefore I will go on, in the third and last place,

III. To give some Directions to avoid this Sin, with suitable Advice to fix the Mind in true Peace.

All the unhappy Wretches, that at last destroy themselves, are in the beginning of their Trouble easily cured by the Assistance of an able and experienced Divine; but generally for want of spiritual Advice and
ghostly

ghostly Comfort, the Devil brings them to neglect first one, and then another, and, at last, all the Ordinances of Grace established by God in his Church, and by that means confines their Views wholly to sense; and then no wonder, when they are not affected by another Life, that they put an end to the Miseries of this. But in order to prevent so fatal a Departure out of this World, let every one that is tempted thereto, observe the following Directions.

I. *Direction.* Upon the first Motions then to this Sin; let the Person tempted immediately open his Mind to a conscientious and prudent Divine, and lay impartially before him the accursed thing that gives the Devil such Dominion over him, in order for his Advice and Prayers; because in this juncture a faithful and prudent Adviser is absolutely necessary: For as the Soul affects the Body, as well as the Body the Mind; so

where either are out of Order, a faithful Friend should be call'd for, not only to divert and comfort him with his Company, but likewise to direct and lead him out of his Misery, by spiritual Advice, and calling in a Physician, if needful (as in these cases it commonly is) for his Directions in regard to the disordered Body.

II. *Direction.* After this, let him betake himself to frequent and fervent Prayer, join'd with stated Times of Fasting, deep Humiliation, and a strict Course of Repentance. By these means the Power of Sin will gradually decay, and the Guilt of it be pardoned through the Blood of Christ. And as Sin languishes, the spiritual Life and Comfort will quicken and increase.

I know some will say, what occasion for all this, when the Temptation may arise wholly from the Loss of Friends, worldly Disappointments
and

and Afflictions, or bodily Pains and Disorder. But still whatever the Cause at first may be, or however innocent, yet there is, at present, a Mixture of Sin in the Mind, which creates the Sting; as a Distrust in God, a fainting or repining under his Correction, or the like, which ought to be purged out by the foregoing Directions.

And where worldly Disappointments, bodily Pains, or the like, are the first Ground of Temptation, it will be proper to add, to the preceding Rules, frequent and serious Reflections upon the shadowy transitory Nature of all Things in this World, if set in comparison with the inestimable and eternal Joys of the Righteous in the next Life. This inspired the Apostles and Primitive Christians with true Courage, and such a just Sense of Things, that they even rejoiced in Afflictions when laid upon them for the Honour of Christ.

Christ. They readily and chearfully endured the Cross, despised the Shame, and ran with Patience the Race that was set before them.

III. And lastly, after his Mind is a little settled, let him frequently exercise himself in the comfortable Promises of the Holy Gospel to all true Penitents; and the infinite Love of God, manifested to us, in the sending his Son, to call Sinners to Repentance in order to pardon and save them.

This of course, if rightly improved, will create in him the Love of God, and increase it; and that will as naturally beget and settle in his Mind true Peace.

By these Means properly applied, I have known a great many Persons, labouring under the utmost Anxiety and Distress of Mind, brought into a State of Peace and Joy. And as there are infallible Remedies in the

the Holy Writings for all mental Grievs, or Wounds of the Spirit: So when these Remedies are properly and prudently applied, they naturally bring Rest to the Soul: Nor should I despair of the Recovery of any one hereby, provided there were any penitential Motions, or the least Remains of Grace left in him.

*Glory be to the Living and True
G O D.*

F I N I S.

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*You then who think that Love's an idle Fit,
Know that it is the Exercise of Wit.
The Soldiers long and tedious Marches make,
The active Lover, for his Mistress' sake,
Will any Toils or Dangers undergo:
Not rugged Mountains, or untrodden Snow;
Rivers by Floods increas'd, no raging Sea,
Nor adverse Winds can ever make him stay,
When Love commands, and Beauty leads the way.*

Ovid.

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